THE LEGENDS
AND TALES OF OWASIPPE

When passing through the Owasippe area, did you ever wonder about the history of the area. Where does trading post road go, what is a Fruitvale, who was Mears Road named after.

Once a Scout wrote home to his mother about his latest adventure hiking and canoeing at Owasippe.

We went to Deserters Cave near Suicide Oak, then started down the White River near Lost Scout Bayou. Spent the night at Poison Springs campsite and started again in the morning, passing Rattlesnake Point. We had lunch at the Dead Man's Roll-away, then visited the grave of the Unknown, where a sign said he was found under a pile of logs.

The poor mother called the camp to be reassured it is safe. This book will tell you how these places got their names from events that have happened in the White River Country.

The next few pages may give you an insight. Mystery and legend provide a colorful legacy of lands surrounding Owasippe.

Preface

Data for the stories presented here have been collected over a period of almost one hundred years by leaders of the Owasippe Scout Camps, many of whom knew intimately the descendants of the men who lived these tales. In some instances they were fortunate in knowing the pioneers themselves. Some stories have been lifted bodily from the accounts written by Ted Shearer, Walter Gunn, and C. A. Edson, whose large contributions of information we wish to acknowledge at this time. Credit is also due to Alex Roz, Earl Walz, Roy AIm, and Roy Bredal for the time and effort they spent in gathering additional information. We trust that during the course of the summer you will make an effort to correct any misinformation, and that you will turn over to the Museum Director of Owasippe Scout Camps any additional legends you know or hear.

To the Scout Leader

Around the campfire, Scouts are clamoring for a Story" What are you going to tell them? About the Old West, the Canadian Wilds, about mysterious places in Europe?

No! Tell them about –**Owasippe**– brave men have lived here and died here too! They'll enjoy your story because they'll be close to the spot on which it happened. And more than that, I they'll leave with a deeper love and respect for Owasippe and its "Hills and Dales".

No attempt has been made to write these stories exactly as they should be told around the campfire rather than that we give you only the historical data we have available, and leave to your story telling ability the task of building these stories as you see fit. Why not weave into these stories, the life of Willie Workhard, of Silent Sammy, the Woodsman, or any of the host of fictitious characters you can bring to mind? This will add that necessary "human interest" to round out the worthwhile historical data.

Edited by George A. Mczealons 1931 Reprinted 1942
Edited by Jack M. Pers 1947 Reprinted 1947, 1954
Edited by Robert Malinowski 2006 (Roads and locations updated)

Dedicated to Jim Marshall, historian and mapmaker for Owasippe Scout Reservation the last 50 years

Yarns and Legends

Chapters

1. **The Legend of Owasippe**
2. **The Old Trading Post**
3. **The Salt Marsh**
4. **The Legend of the White River**
5. **Lumbering on Cleveland Creek**
6. **Dalton Mill**
7. **The White River Roll-aways**
8. **Snows Roll-way and its interesting surroundings**
9. **Dead Man's Roll-away**
10. **Wheat Settlement**
11. **An interesting Yarn**
12. **Cushman's Settlement**
13. **Brown's Pond a cache of Watches**
14. **Carlton dreams of a County Seat**
15. **Forrest City Post Office**
16. **Slab Lake, Wood Lake, Marl Bed, Square Lake and the Virgin Pines**
17. **Hinchman's Halfway Camp at Skeels Creek**
18. **The Brass Pistol**
19. **Snow's Trails and Mounds**
20. **The Oceana**
21. **A Log Drive**

Chapter 1

THE LEGEND OF OWASIPPE

Location: The Spillway on Silver Creek, the Trout Stream, Owasippe' s Grave, and the Burying Ground Point on White River

In days when the White Lake Region was first settled by White men (1840-1850), a tribe of Pottawotamie Indians lived in the vicinity and had its village on Silver Creek (The Trout Stream) at a point near where the Spillway now is. The Chief of this tribe, who was a friend to the White men, was an old Indian by the name of Owasippe. Owasippe had married late in life and had two sons about fifteen and seventeen years of age.

It was a custom among the Indian tribes that when a lad felt that he was old enough and was ready to be admitted as a brave in the tribe, he was required to pass what was known as a manhood test, in order to prove his courage, self-reliance, and woodcraft ability. This test, which varied in detail from tribe to tribe, consisted essentially of the boy's going out for a considerable period of time away from the tribe, frequently going into hostile territory, killing and preparing his own food, and otherwise entirely depending upon his own resources. In the tribe of Owasippe, this test consisted of taking a canoe and scouting trip of a month's duration.

Owasippe's two sons felt that they were ready to pass their manhood tests and to be admitted to the tribe as braves, and arrangements were accordingly made. They packed their canoes with their few utensils and supplies, and started out, sailing down Silver Creek to the White River on to White Lake, out into Lake Michigan, and up toward the country of the Algonquins in Canada.

As the time for their return drew near, Owasippe, whose whole life was wrapped up in these two boys, was keyed up to a high point of anxiety and anticipation. Early in the morning on the day when they were due to return, he climbed the hill back of his teepee and sitting there on an old fallen pine log at a point where he could

command a view of Silver Creek down to its junction with the White River. He waited and watched for their return. All day long he waited for the canoe. At night, exceedingly anxious and worn, he returned to his village, only to renew his watch at daybreak. Day after day he waited thus, and as he waited his anxiety grew. Finally he refused to desert his post and sat there day and night. His faithful wife brought his food to him, but he ate less and less, and finally, after many days, sank into a coma and died.

The canoe of the lads never appeared, and Owasippe was buried on the crest of the hill where he died. His grave is marked only by a sunken hole, mute evidence of a raid made by vandals several years ago when they stole the old Chief's skull.

Scouts are asked to bring rocks whenever they visit this grave, and place them on the earth so that in time this hole will be filled up and a mound will mark the spot where the old chief is buried.

The mystery of the death of Owasippe's sons was not solved for many years. About thirty years after Owasippe's death, a boy fishing along the White River came to a point known as "Burying Ground Point" where there is a high bank. There had been a heavy rainstorm the night before and the boy discovered that a landslide had occurred here. He began exploring about and found the upturned prow of a birch bark canoe. He got a few of his friends and dug into the bank where they found the entire canoe, under which there were two skeletons of young Indian lads.

It was apparent then what had happened. These two sons of Owasippe had successfully completed

their trip and were returning home. Arriving at Burying Ground Point less than a mile from their father's village and practically within sight, they were overtaken by one of those sudden fierce storms, which occasionally visit this region. While there, a landslide suddenly overwhelmed them, burying and crushing them and the canoe, and thus their remains stayed buried until uncovered years later.

Chapter 2

THE OLD TRADING POST

Location: On White River at the end of Weesies road East of Trading Post Rd)

Nowadays we hear only of the trading posts of the "Wild West". But here at Owasippe we have a post antedating a great many of these in the land of Buffalo Bill. It's the "Old Trading Post" four miles up White River from Montague, near the mouth of Carleton Creek. The name of its original white founder (Indians had used this place for many years as a meeting ground) is in doubt, as also is the time of its founding, but recent investigations by Mr. H. L. Spooner, a former resident of Whitehall, have brought to light the possibility of its having been founded about 1810 by a Frenchman named Etienne Lamaranadier. His own post was located on Muskegon Lake. Many highly interesting legends are built around this place. One of the earliest known settlers was Capt. James Dalton, Jr., who came to White Lake in 1844 while in route to what is now Manistee. Indians told him of Silver Creek and he decided to settle there. While seeking a location for a saw mill he discovered, this old cabin then, decayed beyond possibility of repair.

Dalton erected his mill close to this post, at the mouth of Silver Creek, (See story "Dalton's Mill"). At this same time Charles Johnson selected this spot and built combined eating house, saloon and store. Soon other mills, among them Carleton's and Brown's were erected close by and this place enjoyed a large patronage. Indians paddled to it in their canoes, and lumberjacks from the surrounding camps frequented the place.

Johnson grew wealthy and sold out to Johannes Gustaves, whose son John was born there. When his son grew up, both managed the place. Nick Rossiter of Hesperia, an old time river driver, remembers seeing as many as 300 Indians camped about the Post, having a hilarious time as long as their money lasted.

To the river men it gradually became known as the "Snubbing Post". How many of the "true" stories told about this place are true is now unknown, but there is a few surrounding this treasure chest of legend.

There was supposed to be a notorious resort known as "The Hole in the Wall" located a Short distance from the Post. Tradition says that many a man went, into this place and was taken into a tunnel to some unknown spot --***and these men never were seen again!***

A Norwegian family lived near the post. The entire family, father, mother, boy and girl were stricken with smallpox. In an effort to get medical aid the family embarked for Whitehall. The girl died and was buried in the basement of a house built where the Foster place now stands. When this was excavated the bones were found and re-interred in the cemetery. Soon after this the father and mother died, and the boy fell into the hands of a man named Hanson. Hanson in turn gave the boy to the Indians. One night during a drunken powwow one of their members threw the lad into a huge fire. An old squaw rescued him and gave him to a white man. He then passed through several hands and finally he went west. He died a few years ago in New Mexico, carrying to his grave the marks of the burns received from the Indians.

Did you ever hear of a person being delighted at the opportunity of serving as a pallbearer at a relative's funeral? Well, Old Chris and his wife (no one remembers their last name) lived near the Post. His wife was getting old and he wanted to get rid of her and get a young woman. She became ill, so Chris got a young woman to take care of her and do the housework. Thinking that his wife was going to die, he began wooing the younger woman, but he was too bold about it and his wife soon noticed it. She determined to get well, and did. Chris did not like it and abused her, but fate laid a heavy hand on him and soon he who wished to see his wife dead, himself died. His wife insisted on being one of the pallbearers and rejoiced that she could help to carry his body from the house.

The Trading Post school was built on the banks of a small creek close to the river, but was later sold. A new one was built near the present Dahl place. About sixteen years ago an Indian walking along the path that leads to the school's spring stubbed his toe and found the obstruction to be $700.00 in gold that had been laid bare by a recent hard rain. Close to this same spot and the old supply road there were three large mounds. While building this road, remains of a dam and miniature water wheel built by the school children were among the few remaining ruins to be found about this spot.

Because a bridge leading to the Post was recently needlessly destroyed, the post is rather difficult to reach. It is not visible from any road. Within a few years the oldest landmark of the lower White River region will be entirely obliterated and will become only a memory.

Chapter 3

THE SALT MARSH

Location: Along Silver Creek between White River & Spillway at the point where Silver Creek Rd. turns Southward to Whitehall.

Legends surrounding the Salt Marsh vary as to the exact time men attempted to drill in to the earth for this white condiment. Some claim this was done the same year that Captain Dalton built his mill at Silver Creek (1844), others say this was first attempted during the Civil War when salt became scarce. Nevertheless, long before the white men started operations the Indians knew of the salt marsh. Animals too frequented this place to lick the brackish tasting water.

Preparation of the salt necessitated the use of large iron kettles. These kettles the Indians borrowed

from the settlers, and in return for this favor, would bring them back full of salt but refused to divulge the place they obtained it.

Upon hearing that the White Lake region was underlayed with salt water, a man named Hulbert came from Grand Rapids with his two sons and attempted to set up a salt well at the marsh. However, after boring into the earth for eighty feet their drill became jammed and they were forced to abandon the project.

Some say they succeeded in sinking the well, but found that it was unprofitable. They had installed an iron pipe which was surrounded by a jack pipe, made from maples drilled lengthwise (early water pipes in Chicago were made by drilling logs in this manner). Later the grass in the surrounding marsh was cut for hay and Obe Nichols, Who lived close by, said that the workmen used to set their jug of fresh water on this pipe to keep it cool. For many years this pipe stood about three feet above the ground, but gradually both the pipe and the derrick rotted away. The Fruitvale Company now owns the land, and the well has been plugged up so it no longer runs, but the natural springs still seep up with an abundance of the saline liquid.

Hulbert and his two sons later built a mill on Carleton's Creek, which they sold to the man whose name the creek now bears.

Chapter 4

THE LEGEND OF THE WHITE RIVER

When one travels along the lower part of the White River and notice the solitude and desolation, he can hardly realize that at one time this section teemed with life. Long before the advent of the white man, this was a favorite camping place for the Indians, and when the first French trader came into the country, he selected a spot for a trading post about four miles up the river from its mouth as the most favorable site built a log cabin there. (See story headed "Old Trading Post").

There the Indians arrived in large numbers to trade pelts for such supplies, as they needed, the most necessary of which seems to have been the inevitable whiskey. The exact time this log cabin was built is not known, but it was already in a state of bad decay when Charles and Albert Mears, the first permanent white settlers came in 1837. Two miles below the Trading Post was Burying Ground Point, an old time Indian Burial place.

The Indians used this old burial ground for many years. During the last of the lumbering period, the river changed its course and washed out many bodies. Today, although there are probably bodies still left, none can be detected. Several cottages are near the old burying ground. It was near the site of the Trading Post that Charles Mears, later prominent in the history of Muskegon and Oceana counties, chose a spot on Silver Creek near its mouth for the erection of a saw mill. He and his brother Albert, then a boy of fifteen years, and two other men named Herrick and True started from Paw Paw, Michigan and floated down the river to St. Joseph in a clinker built skiff bound for White Lake. The trip was a rough one and it took them nearly two weeks to make it, capsizing several times and running out of provisions long before they reached their destination. On the north of the channel they found two men holding a claim for Hiram Pearsons of Chicago. On the flat where the lighthouse was later built, was a band of a half dozen Ottawa Indian families with their Chief, Wabaningo. They had cleared a small piece of ground and were raising corn.

Mears' party camped the first night at the Mouth, and by noon of the next day they reached Burying

Ground Point. Here they found a band of Indians eating dinner. Mears and his party received a cordial invitation to share the meal, but did not accept. Although used to eating almost anything that the country afforded, the pioneers did not relish the Indian menu of duck eggs, some sound, some questionable, some in the poultry stage or existence, with a large roasted blacksnake for dessert. That night they made the vicinity of the Trading Post and camped at the mouth or Silver Creek. They continued up the river for three days to the rapids above the J. D. Stebbins farm. They then returned to the mouth of Silver Creek and decided to locate there. Albert Mears felled the first tree and within two weeks a cabin 16 by 20 had been built of split logs. Charles then started on route to Paw Paw to get castings for the mill.

Soon True proved "untrue" by skipping out one night after stealing the stock of bread on hand, leaving Albert and Herrick alone. At the end of two months, their provisions ware exhausted and having heard nothing of Charles, they packed their belongings in their skiff and started for Paw Paw. At Grand Haven, thinking he had had enough of hardships, Albert left Herrick and got on a schooner bound for St. Joseph.

Charles Mears and Herrick returned to White Lake that fall with the necessary castings for a water-powered sawmill, which they decided to build on the shore of White Lake, where the Wilcox mill was later located. Early in 1838, the mill commenced sawing clap boards eight feet long with a large circular saw and a few years later an upright saw was put in.

Charles Mears also constructed mills at Duck Lake, Big Sable Point and Pentwater. His own fleet of schooners transported the lumber to Chicago. He also owned some of the first steamers on Lake Michigan. In his diary he refers to the amazing fact that sailors' wages were raised to $18.00 a month.

The first store in Whitehall proper was built by him, and managed by Mr. J. D. Sturtevant. This building was located just above the present village park and boat landing.

Chapter 5

LUMBERING ON CLEVELAND CREEK

Location: Most of the locations described below are now under the waters of Lake *Wolverine when Knopp Dam was built across Cleveland Creek to form the lake.*

Although today Cleveland Creek seems too shallow and narrow to be useful in hauling logs, yet it was once an important stream in the transportation of lumber to the White River and thence to Whitehall. Lumbering operations were first started by a man named Cleveland, Whose name the Creek now bears. This was in the early 1870's. Closely after him came Veston and then a man who was to become a most important figure in this part of the country, Covell.

Just fifty yards to the Northwest of the present Russell Road Bridge, Covell built his lumber camp. Traces of it may yet be seen. Dams were necessary, before this stream could be used for the cartage of logs, If Scouts will examine the banks of the creek closely, traces of these dams may yet be found by following the old lumber trail on the south side of the stream up above the mill about five eighths of a mile. Here one will find the site of Rodgers Dam. Further upstream Snow built a mill; a portion of the bridge, known as Snow's Bridge, leading to this mill is still in place, as is part of the mill.

About three-fourths of a mile upstream from Deuce's Wild (a privately owned hunting cabin) is the site of the Upper Dam properly called Kingsley's Dam, or Dam #2. About one half mile east of this dam was another, known as Dam #l, traces of whose sluiceway may still be seen. Logs would be cut in the winter and taken on sleighs to the bank of the creek and dumped in above the dams. Lumbermen would open the upper dam and close the lower, then, when the water was high enough around the lower, they would open that and let the logs ride down into the White River. Along the banks of the stream men would watch to see that no logs snagged and to guard the turns so that a jam would not form. Then, too, others, picked perhaps for their boldness, would ride the logs using long poles in midstream to prevent snagging and jamming.

Chapter 6

DALTONS MILL

Location: The Spillway and Lake on Silver Creek at the curve in Silver Creek Road.

Captain James Dalton, Jr., came to the White River country about 1844. His original intention was to continue on up to Manistee, however, after hearing the Indians tell of the wonderful lumbering country around the White River and Silver Creek, he decided to go there, and if the country proved to be as favorable as it was painted, to settle. This he did, and, after much exploring decided to locate on Silver Creek close to the White River.

He was opposed in this enterprise by Charles Mears, who claimed that there was not enough timber in that part of the country for more then one mill. However, Mears was wrong, inasmuch as before many years had passed there were eleven saw mills and five shingle mills on White Lake as well as many smaller ones scattered throughout the woods. Every stream big enough to float logs naturally or artificially boasted its mills.

In 1845, Dalton, with the aid of his two brothers, erected a dam and waterpower mill. These remained in operation thirty-six years, till 1881. The site of Dalton's Mill is now privately owned. The dam is kept in repair in order to keep the pond above it, which is used quite extensively, for fishing. This dam along with a small apple orchard and a row of locust trees are all that remain of this industrious mill.

Near the orchard stood the home of the foreman. After the mill was abandoned, this house was used by an old woman named Maggie Kelly, a ward of the county. The house is now destroyed. In its last

years the mill was used as a grist mill.

Chapter 7

THE WHITE RIVER ROLL-AWAYS

We hear so much about roll-aways that we'll take this opportunity to describe them and their purpose. First, as to the name, "Roll-away" (some spell it "rollway) not much difference as I see it, but I prefer the former. You can take your choice.

The White River roll-aways were usually high banks on the river's edge. Logs were gathered during the winter and hauled on sleighs to these banks and were piled in such a manner as to permit their being pushed off the roll-away and into the river whenever the spring flood had reached its highest point.

The entire pile was controlled by one log known as the "King" or "Key" Log. When the time for the shove-off arrived, the key log was pushed from its position and started all the others tumbling into the river. A few logs usually remained on top and these were pushed to the edge and allowed to roll-away".

At the foot of the roll-away the water is usually deep, especially where the river makes a bend as it hits the roll-away. At the foot of these roll-aways logs can usually be found stuck in the mush of the river. Generally those logs were too close grained and therefore too heavy to float. Along the river other logs can be found, which had snagged and stuck. Several old lumbermen say that quite a number of men died while working on the river. Causes of death were numerous. Some died in fights, others in straightening out logjams, still others from sickness, some on the roll-aways and in the mills and some, while drunk, stumbled and fell to their death. The men who died while working on the river were buried in the woods bordering the river near the spot where they died. These graves are unmarked. Here's an opportunity to start your evening’s story by saying, "You may be sitting on the grave of a lumberjack". That will give them a thrill.

Chapter 8

SNOWS'S ROLL-AWAY AND IT'S INTERESTING SURROUNDINGS

Don Snow (see "Lumbering on Cleveland Creek) did not confine himself to lumbering activities on Cleveland Creek, but built t another mill about a half mile south of the upper White River. It is situated in Section 29 of the Greenwood Township, Oceana County. This mill was used until 1925, and is still in a fairly good state of preservation.

North of the mill is Snow's Roll-away, and a few hundred yards to the East is another roll-away. At this second roll-away a death occurred, strange even to this strange country. On top of this roll-away is concrete flooring upon which there once stood the home of an old man who lived alone. During an unusually severe winter when the straits of Mackinac were frozen, a pack of wolves, driven out of Canada by lack of food, and the intense cold, went South through the upper peninsula, then crossed the straits into the lower peninsula. Coming down the White River those wolves came upon the home of this old man at the time he was desperately ill and in bed. Since he was unable to defend himself in any way, the wolves broke into his home and ate him alive in bed.

At the same time a colored butcher traveled through this country going from farm to farm slaughtering hogs for the farmers. Early one evening he had occasion to go from one farmhouse to another a few Miles distant and he started off across the fields. The next morning, the farmer started out to find him. About midway between his place and that of his neighbor, he came upon a most gruesome sight, which told the story of a man's heroic struggle against death. Against the tree he found the remains of the butcher, picked clean to the bone, and about him were nine wolves, each with a knife through its body. The butcher, overtaken by the wolves, had backed against a tree and used all his knives in a vain attempt to escape, but the wolves, being desperately in need of food, pressed on, and when his weapons were gone, well, so was the butcher.

Right beside the foundations of the house in which the, old man was killed, there is a concrete dugout. During World War 1 a deserter from the U. S. Army hid here for more than a year and a half. Looking at it, one is led to believe that he suffered more in his hideout than he would have at the

hands or the toughest sergeant of the mule brigade. Close by there is another cave, though used for an entirely different purpose. An old recluse used this cave for a number of years. What finally became of him is unknown to this "day. This is situated across the branch of Cleveland Creek on an old lumber road.

Chapter 9

DEAD MAN'S ROLL-AWAY AND THE GRAVE OF THE UNKNOWN

For the past century, the bank just north of the county line bridge on Fruitvale Road over the White River has been known as "Dead Man's Roll-away". As with many other places around this part of the country, the tales about the origin of this name vary. Here are the two versions most often repeated.

Many men drifted into lumber camps, who never divulged their true identity nor gave any indication of their past. And no questions were ever asked. If a fellow looked as though he was able to work, he was given a job. On such man wandered into a camp not far from where the county line bridge now crosses the White River. This log roller went into Whitehall one night, and during the course of the evening he got into an argument with some other lumberjack over a woman. They fought and the former was the victor.

On the way back to the camp he elected to walk along the bank of the river at what is now the county line bridge. Above him, on top of the roll-away stealthily crept the man he had conquered. When he approached the pile of logs, the man above rolled one down, crushing his foe to death, burying him in the muck of the river where his body was not found until the following spring. He was then buried at a spot that is alongside the road leading to Bartlett's place. A crude wooden cross and railing were erected to mark the grave. This cross bore the lettering

"TO THE UNKNOWN"

Eventually they rotted and were replaced by the Bartlett's with a cross and fence of cedar. The other story, too, states that this fellow was a lumberjack but that when he returned to camp he was sent out to break a small jam and in doing this slipped on a log and was killed.

Chapter 10

WHEAT SETTLEMENT

Location: About one mile south of Owasippe Lake on White Lake Road just East of the Hwy 31 overpass.

About 1845 the U.S. Government granted a homestead (a plot of 160 acres of land) to any who desired to settle at the spot now known as Wheat Settlement.

Another legend states that this place was first called 'Sweet's Settlement" after a man purported to be the first settler. People gathered here, cleared timber off the lands, built homes with a portion of it and sold the balance in Whitehall for whatever it would bring. On this cleared land the men began planting wheat. Their first harvest met with fair success and they were jubilant over the prospects for continued prosperous farming.

Again they sowed their wheat but this time met but little of their former good fortune. What they believed would prove to be in great farming country turned out to be worthless. Year after year they continued to plant, but each year saw a much poorer crop than the previous season.

Discouraged, same settlers moved away, seeking new and more fertile lands. The growth of the town of Whitehall, due to lumbering activities and it’s advantageous position on White Lake, also had much to do with the disbanding of this settlement. But some stayed. About 1874 very few of the once populous community remained, and the land became practically worthless. The story is related that a Mr. Collins, whose nephew now resides in Whitehall, traded his 160 acres for a patent ox yoke worth but a-few dollars.

Eventually only a few settlers were left and these have since died or moved away. Today we see only the fields these hardy people tilled and a few ruins of the homes they left behind. Some of these places have since been identified. Just a few yards north of what was called

Sprague's Corner on the west side of the road arc the ruins of 'the settlement blacksmith shop. Camp West boasts of having one half of a bellows found in these ruins. Scouts got the credit for identifying the Hickey Homestead. About seven years ago a group of Scouts found letters and papers strewn about this place. “Imagine their surprise and delight when they discovered among these papers two documents signed by the "Great Emancipator",

ABRAHAM LINCOLN.

One of those was a citation for bravery dated 1863, the other Mr. Hickey's commission as a captain in the Army. There also was a letter sent by Hickey to his folks, describing the wonderful reception tendered him upon the arrival of his command in Chicago. Near Fox Lake on the northeast corner of the bend of the gravel road one-mile south of Three Lakes Tavern stood the settlement school. On a little hill just west of Sprague's Corner, was the Community cemetery. There are many graves, but time and relic hunters have obliterated most of the tombstones. What few remain have been set upright again and carefully preserved.

Stagecoaches, the principal means of transportation at that time, came to "Wheat Settlement over the road just due north of the cemetery. This road ran diagonally across the clearing to Sprague's Corners. The junction of this road and that corresponds to our present U.S. 31 was called Monroe's Corner after a man who settled there about 1880.

That part or the U.S. 31 running directly northwest of the Green Lantern is also a part of the old stage coach road. But here enters real mystery. **A lost cemetery**! Perhaps you can find it, and blaze a trail to it so that all may see that which has been hidden for many years. There were possibly only a half dozen graves in this cemetery that were prominently marked, the whole having a fence around it. But time and the elements have destroyed both the stones and fence. Back in 1921 during a Red and White War this cemetery was located by a group of scouts.

Later, in 1925, a leader, Russell Shuler, found it, but again it was lost. Here is the approximate location:

North of the road, which passes the haunted house and the other cemetery and south of the fence line that is a half mile north of this Road and which is on the edge of the woods. The cemetery itself is located in the heart of a dense woods and is approximately South of the old Hickey house, being about on a line between this house and the point where an old wagon trail which runs diagonally northwest and southeast from the U.S. 31 to the section line road on which Wheat Settlement cemetery is situated and strikes the latter road.

Now! Let’s see who's going to re-discover this hidden cemetery and mark a trail so that Owasippe can have another interesting spot to add to its fascinating list.

Chapter 11

AN INTERESTING YARN

Mark Covell tells an interesting story of these days. They had a camp on Minnie Creek, five miles below Hesperia. A lot of small pine had been cut but had not yet been skidded and the camp was to move to another location several miles further up. Mark and a few other men were left at the old camp to pick up the remaining logs, which would take only one day. The cook got their noon lunch ready before leaving and packed it in a box.

Early in the morning the main gang moved. When noon came and Mark and his men went to the cook shanty for dinner, no lunch could be found. Someone had by mistake put it on a sleigh and had taken it to the other camp. On looking around they found part of a barrel of crackers and a jug of black molasses. One of them put the crackers in a trough on a long table and another poured the molasses

over them.

This constituted their dinner that day. They finished their job and went to the other camp that night. The next morning they found the ground covered with four feet snow. Soon after, while the snow was still very deep, and the cold intense, a young German boy named John C. Fox working at the Covell Camp, 26-miles from Whitehall, was badly cut in the foot with an axe. Seneca Fuller, the cook, took clean cloths used, for wiping dishes and bound up the foot. A sleigh was rigged up and a wagon box put on it.

Fox was wrapped up in blankets and put in the box and Mark Covell and another man started for Whitehall about eight o'clock that night. Part of the way he had to tramp down the snow in front of the horses. It got colder and colder. At Cushman's mill the bolster got caught on a tree and the sleigh nearly tipped over. Fox, who was in intense pain groaned. He then complained of being cold. Covell then took off his overcoat and put it on the wounded boy. He then had to walk behind the sleigh to avoid the wind in an effort to keep warm. In order to keep moving he had to hang on to the sleigh, Covell knew that when he reached the William Whitman place he could get a pair of bobs from Whitman and thus make traveling easier. But when they arrived there, Mrs. Whitman informed them that her husband had gone to Muskegon two days before then and had not returned. She expected him every minute, but Covell knew what these winter storms meant and he did not dare wait for such an uncertain thing.

They took the boy to the Covell's boarding house and secured Dr. MacKinnon to dress the wound. When he had cut off the improvised bandages, he discovered that the foot had grown to seemingly gigantic proportions and bore such an ugly color, that it made Hirman Staples, who was a witness, faint at the sight.

Fox remained here for seven weeks before he could get out. He could not read English and the time was lonesome. A druggist had some German almanacs, and each morning one would be taken to the boy. He would read it through and the next day he would be given another. In this way, he used up the druggist's supply. Fox was later in the livery business at White Cloud and is now a farmer near Fremont.

Chapter 12

CUSHMAN'S SETTLEMENT

This place is typical of many others in the White River Country where people attempted to settle and soon discovered that there was little for them to live on.

Cushman's settlement covered a territory of miles around Cushman's corners. It is located in the northwest portion, Section 21, Greenwood Township, Oceana County. It developed into quite a community, at one time having a population of 250. However, the land proved to be poor for farming and the people were soon "starved out". A fire burnt down Cushman's place in May 1930. The cause of the fire is unknown. Lumber is occasionally used for the grim purpose of building a gallows. At Cushman's stands a tree that was used for this purpose, without being moved from its home. Near the mill site is a large oak called "Suicide Oak". Here Mrs. Cushman hanged herself using an apron as a noose. She was thought to be insane. No other reason could be found for her act.

There seems to be another story of tragedy connected with this particular tree, but, as yet no one has been found who can shed light on the mystery.

Perhaps during your travels this summer you may be able to find some "old timer" who can tell you

this story? Of course, if you do you'll let us know so that we can incorporate your discovery in this booklet.

Chapter 13

BROWN'S POND A CACHE OF WATCHES

A man named Brown built a dam on Sand Creek where the Rochdale Inn once stood on Fruitvale Road. Close by he built, a water power saw mill. Having dammed the creek, he thus formed a pond, which still remains and bears his name. This pond was the scene of the last big lumber drive in the White River country. The Covells, who made the last drive, built a railroad, which ran from Ferry (Now New Era) to the pond.

In 1894 there was a wreck on the line near Ferry which seven were killed and two injured. This road was used until 1895, the year of the last drive, and then torn up." Remains of it can not be seen, the track right of way has since overgrown with bushes.

About 1910, a group of Chicago promoters bought the Property and subdivided it for lots. A dam was built and the course of the creek changed, but one can still see the site of the old dam and creek bed.

The boarding house of the mill hands was used as the nucleus for the large Inn that stood there.

Patsy Moran, a local character, while taking out stumps for the Fruitvale Company, found a large number of watches under a stump, so corroded by exposure that they were worthless. What local highwayman, or did Uncle Ike the money lender, put them away for safe keeping, and neglected to mark the hiding place?

Chapter 14

CARLTON DREAMS OF A COUNTY SEAT

After the Hulberts failed to establish a salt well in the marsh (see story headed "The Salt Marsh") they built a sawmill on Carleton Creek about three miles from the trading post that was located near the mouth of the creek on the White River. They soon sold it to the Hon. I. E. Carleton who operated it until his death in 1871. The machinery was then moved to the Power's Mill at Ferry. The building has

since entirely disappeared.

Capt. Dalton and the Hon. Carleton were great friends and frequent parties were held at either of the two mills. A crowd of twenty whites and fifty Indians gathered to participate in the first Fourth of July celebration in the White River Country in 1848. Then as now, beans seemed to be the favorite "fruit" because the menu consisted exclusively of huge portions of the delectable tidbits.

Capt. Dalton delivered an oration to the assembled throng and to cap the climax, the steamer Mitchell hoisted its flag and both Whites and Indians joined in wild hurrahing. At the time of its settlement, this section was a part of Ottawa County. Carleton and Dalton were both opposed to the founding of Muskegon County.

Carleton, who became quite a figure in politics, wanted to form a county to be called Oceana (not the present Oceana) and proposed that it comprise the northern townships of Muskegon County and the southern townships of the present Oceana, with the county seat at his mill. If he had secured his wish, he undoubtedly would have eventually seen the county seat go to Whitehall or Montague where the population and wealth later centered. All that remains of the dream of a county scat town are the magnificent maples he planted around his residence. The timbers of the old mill are gone and traces of the dam can be found only with difficulty.

A fishing club now has a cabin on the site of Carleton's residence.

Chapter 15

FORREST CITY POST OFFICE

The road from Silver Creek to Big Blue was used for the transportation of mail long before the Owasippe Camps were established.

Today our Postmaster bounces over the road in his rheumatic tin horse - not many years ago, a man named Clark carried mail on horseback for the Pony Express on this same trail.

He traveled between Whitehall and Forest City (located near County Line Road). The mail route led west from Forrest City on County Line Road to Big Blue Lake, from there to the Spillway and thence to Whitehall. Several people still have letters marked "Forest City"

Chapter 17

HINCHMAN'S HALFWAY CAMP

The name of this place describes exactly its purpose. When the lumberjacks came down along the river during

a lone drive, they would put up at this place for the night. It is located approximately two miles above County Line Bridge (Fruitvale Rd. Bridge) on the White River near the confluence of the North Branch of the river. It originally was composed of a group of perhaps half a dozen cabins. Close by there is a corduroy road used in transporting logs to the river, for in addition to being a stop-over point, logs were also gathered here and shoved into the river for their journey to Whitehall.

SKEELS CREEK

This creek is named after Colonel Roffer Skeels, who built: a mill on it. It is located about three miles up river from the county line bridge. Tragedy stalked at Skeel's Mill and it was finally abandoned. One day a man, while pushing logs along a runway toward the huge rotary saw, slipped and was cut diagonally in half. Fellow workers picked up the body and placed it on a table, but found that the heart *was* still beating. I suppose now I should say they sewed him together and he lived happily ever after, but no, I must disappoint you, he later died from his wounds!

Chapter 16

SLAB LAKE

A very interesting spot related to the early lumbering days is Slab Lake. It is reached by following Whitehall Rd. East from Camp Reneker and turn South on Blue Lake Rd a quarter mile, the lake is in plain sight on the right of the road.

On this lake there was for some years a Shingle Mill, which burned and the ruins of which can now be seen. Logs were cut into short pieces, the correct size for shingles and were then sawed into the shingles themselves. The operation, of course, collected a large amount of sawdust, which was piled on the edge of the lake and gradually filled out into it. Interspersed through the sawdust are the small blocks of logs, which were not suitable for shingles and, therefore, were not sawed.

WOOD LAKE

On the lower end of Wood Lake, which is in the northwest corner of Section 35, Blue Lake Township, there is a large amount of slabs left by the sawmill formerly operated on this lake.

MARL BEDS

In section 21 of B1ue Lake Township, near the headwaters of the west branch of Cleveland Creek, there is a marl bed. At one point the stream has worn a small waterfall which makes a musical tinkle that can be heard a considerable distance. In a country, which is almost exclusively sand, it is both interesting and surprising to find a real waterfall.

SQUARE LAKE

In the southwest corner of Section 22 of Blue Lake Township is Square Lake, lying just to the north of the road. A trail just east of this lake leads north to Nine-acre Lot Lake where a few primeval pines may be found.

These are well worth a trip to see. A faint branch to the right of the trail leading to Nine-acre Lot Lake leads to Cleveland Creek, one fork of it leading to Dam #l and one to Dam *ff2.* These are both good hiking routes.

VIRGIN PINES

A few Virgin Norway pines may be found in a valley north of Canfield Lake in Section 29 of Blue Lake Township. Follow the road leading north along the East Side of the lake for about a quarter of .a mile, the road leads down to a former lake bottom. Diagonally to the northeast across this lake bottom is a beautiful dense grove of young white pine scattered through which may be found the Old Norways referred to.

Chapter 18

THE BRASS PISTOL

A sudden, heavy downpour struck the city of Muskegon, driving people off the streets, and a considerable number took temporary refuge in the Occidental Hotel. Amongst these was a group of traveling salesmen that sat down in a corner of the lobby and began chattering first about the weather, and then reminiscing about other storms, which they had experienced. From there, the conversation drifted by natural degrees to tales of adventure then to tales of mystery. When those had been going on for some time, one of the men told of an experience, which he had had as a boy.

He said, "There is one mystery that has been in our family for some thirty years. When I was a lad, I lived in the village of Whitehall and used to go fishing along the banks of the White River. While doing so one time, I was standing on the very edge of the bank slightly above the edge of the river, when it suddenly caved in, having been undermined by the water. I got wet all over and pretty well muddied up, but on recovering my balance and starting to climb out on the bank, I was surprised to get a metallic gleam of something which had been uncovered by my foot as I slid down. I stooped to pick it up to see what it was, and was very much surprised to find an old brass Derringer pistol of very curious design, which, when I polished it, *was* found to have on it vary intricate scroll work, and was apparently of German make. On finding this pistol I naturally explored around with my fingers to see if I could find anything in addition and succeeded in uncovering two or three bones which were apparently human bones, and an old beaded moccasin. I was, of course, very much excited at this discovery and immediately ran home and told my father about it.

“He got the sheriff and they came out and dug thoroughly around the vicinity and succeeded eventually in uncovering a complete skeleton of a man together with mate to the moccasin, which I had found. They were however, unable to determine any clue as to who the man was or how he had died.

So they gave the bones such decent burial as they could, and father permitted me to keep the pistol as a souvenir, but we have wondered always to whom the pistol and moccasins belonged and how he came to meet his death. We at first supposed that it must have been an Indian on account of the beaded moccasins, but the appearance of the bones seemed to indicate that it had been a white man."

During the telling of this story, one man had been listening very intently, leaning further and further forward into his chair. On its conclusion he said to the speaker, "I am very much interested in your story and wonder whether it would be possible for me to see the brass pistol. I have never seen but one of the kinds you described, and I should like very much to see, whether this one resembles it. I wonder if you would be willing to send it to me and I will return it, or I will be willing to go to your home at Whitehall to see it. "The other man replied that it would not be at all necessary for him to make a trip as he always carried the pistol along with, him in his grip. He then produced it and gave it to the other man, to examine. He took the pistol and examined it very closely, turning it over and over in his hands. Finally he straightened up and handed back the pistol saying:

“Well, that explains a mystery that has long puzzled our family. Some fifty years ago my father was in charge of a lumber gang that was working on the White River. There came to Whitehall, a Swede who, was known as Jense. He was a peculiar chap, never talking about himself and mixing very little with those about him. He signed up as a member of my father’s group and went up into the woods with him. He had very little to say and made few friends. However, he did have a knack of making friends with the Indians who frequented the region and after some time a local chief presented him a pair of beautiful beaded moccasins which he highly prized. Jense was a man of

quick temper, rather sullen, but a good worker, doing faithfully his share of the work.

However, he was not willing to be imposed upon, and resented being asked to do more than he felt was his share. He would come in from a hard day's work in the woods or on the river, draw off his heavy lumbering boots, slip on these Indian moccasins and sit and smoke his pipe for a while before going to bed. He had no active enemies of which we knew but he always by day and night carried with him a curiously designed and highly ornamented German Derringer pistol, which was made of brass. We often wondered whether he was afraid of some enemy tracking him down and so perhaps carried this pistol for his self-protection.

One evening as the men were sitting around the fire, word came in to my father that the logs that we were floating down the river had started to form a jam. Jense protested but my father insisted on his orders being carried out. Jense got up suddenly and grabbed his pike pole, which he would need to break up the logjams. He never returned and we never heard anything further from him. We had always wondered as to what had become of him, the general idea being that probably in his anger at being asked to do this extra work he had simply deserted the gang, abandoned his pay and struck off to find employment elsewhere.

"I can see clearly now, however, what happened. This pistol which you have found is unquestionably the one which Jense always carried and the moccasins were his. He undoubtedly went down to the river, walked out on the logs to break up the jam. But being angry, therefore not cautious and having on the slippery moccasins instead of the heavy calked boots, such as are worn by lumbermen when riding the logs, a log turned under him and he lost his footing. He went down into the river, the logs closed over him and ground him into the muck were he remained until you found him here years afterwards."

Chapter 19

SNOW'S TRAILS AND MOUNDS

Location: South of Big Blue Lake

There are many old lumbering trails throughout the entire White River region which "era used primarily to haul logs to the various roll-aways. Generally speaking, those roads wind from tree to tree and keep as far as possible in the lowland in order to avoid the necessity of hauling the trees over ridges.

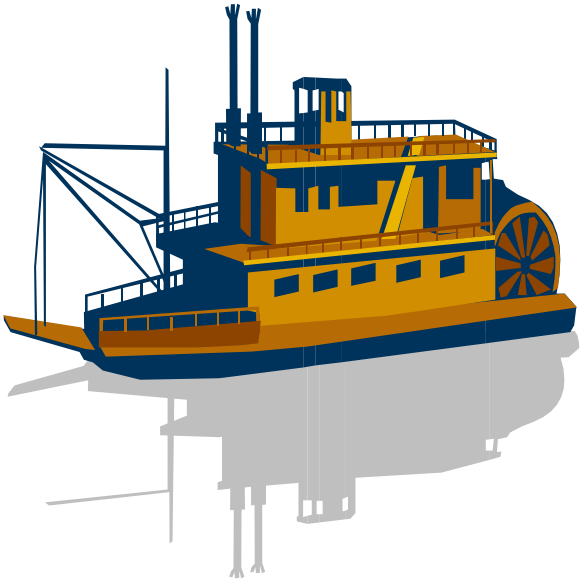
One such trail was built by Don Snow (see the story "Lumbering on Cleveland Creek") along the south side of Blue Lake to Cleveland Creek. This trail, which has not been used since about 1890, is known as Snow's Trail and much of it had been cleared out as a hiking trail by the Scouts.

When the trail was built, there was discovered a series of mounds that were evidently graves. These are located at a spot perhaps two hundred yards West of where the trail crossed the outlet from Blue Lake and lying southeast of the sunk hole formerly known as Pickerel Pond. When the trail was being built, it was necessary to cut off one corner of one of these grave mounds, and an old musket was unearthed.

It was thought at first that this was an Indian cemetery, but the general formation and lay of the mounds makes this doubtful.

It may be that back in the very early days before this region was settled at all some exploring bands of pioneers had a battle with the Indians on this spot and lost several of their number and buried them in the woods.

Chapter 20



THE OCEANA

The hulk of an old lumbering boat, the Oceana may be seen along Sand Creek. It was used by the Daltons. (See "Dalton's Mill" story) to carry supplies to their camp from Whitehall. A number of years ago, a heavy storm tore out the old dam on Sand Creek Point were the Rochdale Inn once stood. When the dam was rebuilt, the channel was changed to a different course so that the old channel became nothing but a marsh, which became overgrown with a thicket of alder and other brush

The old lumber boat, therefore, remained there in the old channel where it is entirely surrounded by bush, much of which is growing through the center of the boat itself.

On account of the difficulty of locating this boat, a definite trail was blazed to it, To find the boat, follow the roadway that leads from the old Rochdale Inn Road along the west bank of the old channel about fifty yards. Before you come to the woods, there is a solitary large pine on the edge of the bank. Looking directly west from this pine, the blazed trail can be picked up which leads directly to the old lumber boat some five hundred feet distant.

Note: This is now private property and permission must be asked from the owners

Chapter 21

A LOG DRIVE

All winter the men and teams have been at work in the woods hauling logs to the river bank, and when the snow and ice are gone they prepare to float them to the mill. This is called driving logs.

Driving logs in the old days on White River was a job requiring considerable nerve as well as skill. The men engaged in the work were constantly in danger of being drowned or crushed in the jams or roll-aways. They were generally a lot of hardy, active fellows, who ware ready to take the risk, as the work commanded good wages and there, was no lost time, Sunday included, from the day their names were enrolled on the pay list.

As the lonely winter wore away and signs of spring began to come, river- men began to come in from the woods and congregate at Whitehall, the headquarters for all the camps along White River. From about the middle of March until the first of April, the saloons did a rushing business. The general rule for the lumbermen was to first buy a suit of clothes, including boots with a hundred corks (sharpened bits of steel) in each. A red sash to tie around the waist completed the outfit, and next to go to the saloon and blow in the balance of the cash. This last proceeding usually resulted with a black eye and a bloody nose.

When his money was all spent he was ready to go up the river to the point the superintendent assigned him twenty miles or more away. His friend, the saloonkeeper has equipped him with two quarts of execrable fluid and a package of peerless tobacco, shakes his hand and off he starts on foot. All day long he trudges along a trail obstructed by fallen trees often leading through swamps and swales. About 9:00 P.M., he arrives at camp footsore and weary. The camp consists of a heap of blazing logs around which the men gather after the day’s work is over. There, wet garments hang upon poles to dry, while they regale themselves with all the delicacies a wilderness affords, a tin cup of very strong tea, a tin plate on which is served boiled potatoes, salt pork, baked beans and warm biscuits. A little to one side is a large tent furnished with hemlock boughs and coarse blankets. This is the sleeping apartment. On the opposite side of the fire is a smaller tent for the cook's supplies. Here is another fire where the cooking is done. Two crotched sticks are driven into the ground, a pole laid across to support the two or three iron pots in which the boiling is done. Tin ovens open to the fire are used for baking. This department is presided over by a male cook who can chew and smoke as much tobacco as any of the boys. After supper the evening entertainment begins.

It is usually opened by White Water Bill, and concluded by a thrilling story from Roll-Way-Jack. At its conclusion the men "turn in" to sleep if they can, or if wakeful, to be serenaded by “hoot owls” or the hum of the hungry mosquito. At the first flush of dawn the stentorian voice of the cook is heard calling "Turn out boys", and soon the camp is alive. The men appear with boots in hand that require much pulling and kicking against stumps with some very loud talking before they are settled to their owner's satisfaction. After a douse of cold spring water they are ready for breakfast and the day's work. They shoulder their pevies and, headed by the foreman, they strike out in Indian file through the swamp and wood until they reach a high bluff at the foot of which is the head of the jam. The logs are piled in great confusion from bank to bank and extend up the river for a mile or more in a solid body.

Below, the river runs clear and smooth and winds off through the swamp like a huge snake. The men go down the hill and after considerable lifting, rolling and chopping, the jam is broken and the logs begin to move. The great body of water sends them down with increasing velocity, often tearing trees from the bank and sending them breaking and crashing downstream with the logs. The river driver

calls this a good haul. The hauling of a job in rapid water is very exciting work. Many a man is thrown headlong into the water for being more daring than the rest. This is a common occurrence and as the sun rises higher and warms the air, this little episode is soon forgotten as the men jump on the logs as they go rolling and whirling down the river, often having to lie down on the log to get under overhanging branches. Men got to be experts and some will handle a log as easily as others would a canoe. The men scatter along the river in places where the logs are most likely to jam. The men above break them loose and those below keep them moving on over this division to the crew below and so on to the sorting grounds at the mouth of the river.

Farther up is another crew that cleans up the drive. It consists of two gangs of men called the jam crew and the sackers. During the driving, some logs are crowded out along the shore. The sackers roll these back into the river and they are continually wading in the water all day. When the logs are sacked into the rear of the jam, the jam crew breaks them loose and stops them a mile or so below by swinging a boomstick across the river. This is done to raise the water so the sackers can float the heavier logs that always hang behind the jam. After the sack is brought in, the jam is again moved, and so on until late in the season the last log is sacked in and delivered

At the mills; then the men are paid. After fitting themselves with clothes for the winter; they soon deposit their remaining cash with the saloonkeeper and taking his receipt in sore heads and black eyes, they are off again for the woods.

Such was the life of the River Driver on the White River in the times that are past.

\

Produced by the
E.A. Goodman Museum
At Owasippe Scout Reservation
Twin Lakes, MI

Additional copies available
Send an email to
Bsa140@comcast.net

Want to learn more about lumbering in Michigan?

Then visit this interactive site with over 175 historic pictures of the days of the lumberjack. Michigan's rich history in this industry was responsible for many successes and failures and the products of this history helped rebuild Chicago and supply the western United States with lumber.

http://www.michiganepic.org/lumbering/lumbering.html